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Class 144

Book 19458

THE HERMIT,

OR AN ACCOUNT OF

Francis Adam Joseph Phyle,

A NATIVE OF SWITZERLAND,

Who lived without the use of fire for upwards of twenty-two years, in a small cave, in the midst of a wood, near Mount-Holly, in Burlington county, New-Jersey; and was found dead therein, in the year 1780.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS,

FROM

BALTUS HILTZHIMER TO MELCHOIR MILLER.

Interspersed with some

Observations of the Author, and Sentiments of celebrated men.

.....
SECOND EDITION.
.....

NEW JERSEY.

PUBLISHED BY JOHN ATKINSON:

Printed by John Bioren, No. 88, Chesnut Street,
Philadelphia,

1811.

DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY, TO WIT :

Be it remembered, That on the twenty-first day of December, in the thirty-fifth year of the Independence of the United States of America, John Atkinson of the said district hath deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as author in the words following, to wit : " The Hermit, or an account of Francis Adam Joseph Phyle, a native of Switzerland, who lived without the use of fire for upwards of twenty-two years, in a small cave, in the midst of a wood, near Mount-Holly in Burlington County, New-Jersey, and was found dead therein in the year 1780 ; in a series of letters from Baltus Hiltz-himer to Melchior Miller, interspersed with some observations of the author, and sentiments of celebrated men."

In conformity to the act of the Congress of the United States entitled " An act for the encouragement of learning by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned ;" and also to the act intituled " An act supplementary to an act entitled an act for the encouragement of learning by securing the copies of maps, charts and books to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned, and by extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching historical and other prints.

ROBERT BOGGS, Clerk
of the District of New-Jersey.

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I CERTIFY the above to be a true copy of the original record. In testimony whereof I have hereunto affixed the seal of the said district.

ROBERT BOGGS, Clerk.

[illegible]

LETTER I.

BURLINGTON COUNTY,

June, 1780.

Dear Friend,

YOU “ request an account of the Mount-Holly Hermit—where he came from—the time of his arrival—a description of his hermitage—the manner of his procuring sustenance—his character, conduct, death, and burial.”

Living in the neighbourhood of Mount-Holly, and having frequently seen the solitaire who is the subject

of your inquiries, as well in his solitude as in his mendicant peregrinations, I will cheerfully give you such information respecting him as I am at present in possession of, on condition only that you will call into exercise all your candour and good nature in excuse of the very many faults you will, at the first glance, discover in my communications ; indeed, I am, so well aware of my deficiency in the composition, that had I not the utmost reliance on your friendly partiality, the gratitude I feel for all your past favours, I fear, would be scarcely powerful enough to compel a compliance with your request. Thus assured, I shall make it my business to collect, from sources which may be implicitly relied on, such anecdotes concerning him as may be worth

your notice, and from time to time communicate them, well assured that in thus gratifying a curiosity proceeding from the most laudable motives, I am at the same time recording the fate of a member of the human family, who, however uncommonly led to retire from the busy scenes of life, to despise the riches, honours, and conveniences for which millions of his fellow men are daily risking immortal happiness to obtain, appeared to possess a mind cast in no common mould ; a hardihood of character which would have added honour to many of the heroes of antiquity, and a suavity of manners which no gentleman of modern times would blush to own.

In the spring of 1756, the people in Mount-Holly and parts adjacent.

found their curiosity much awakened by reports, that a stranger had taken up his abode in a wood belonging to Joseph Burr, on the Burlington road; that he appeared to be a middle aged man, was a foreigner, was totally ignorant of the English language, and was dressed in the uniform of a French soldier; that he had frequently been seen at the neighbouring farm-houses, begging victuals. The people, suspecting from his frequent visits that he lived somewhere near them, had followed him, and found that he had dug out the ground under the side of a large tree, which had been blown up by the roots, until there was room enough for him to creep into it.

This incident gave rise to a good deal of speculation, but as an account

thereof would be no more likely to amuse than to profit you, I will not trouble you with it, but proceed to relate that the stranger had been seen first on the farm of Lot Ridgway, about a month before, whose servants going to a distant part of the farm to break some stacks of hay, descried a hovel composed of rails taken from an adjoining fence and reared against one of the stacks, over which there was hay thrown. Upon advancing to it they found our hermit, whose figure appearing extraordinary, excited a surprise which was equalled on his part by chagrin, for it was plain enough to be seen by the wag-gons having the usual apparatus for removing hay, that his encampment was to be broken up, and that he must remove, which, after intercharr-

ging some marks of civility with them, he undertook ; but, as he knew not where to go, being a stranger to the country and its language, every reflecting mind will suppose his situation was very trying ; and he has since said, that in his peregrinations up and down in a country to whose language he was a stranger, and in which all his supplies were obtained through signs, his adverse allotment required a greater share of philosophy than he could at all times call to his aid.

It being but six miles to where he took up his permanent abode, he reached it the same day, and as he stopped several times and made signs for victuals it was then noticed, as indeed it has sufficiently appeared since, that he possessed great good

breeding, and would upon receiving any thing, make a low bow, and always kiss his crucifix, at the same time lifting up his hands and eyes in apparent supplication, as if calling down benedictions on the heads of those who were administering to his necessities. This appearance of gratitude and devotion would cause the people to forget their prejudices (long entertained against some tenets of the church he belonged to) and strong emotions of pity were excited for the distressed stranger; and I rejoice that I can record to the honour of the people in his neighbourhood, that (with a few exceptions which shall be noticed in proper time) they have ever treated our hermit with kindness and humanity; I the more willingly do this

it being not only a just encomium on the virtue and hospitality of a people among whom our hermit has always found a ready admittance, and from whose tables he never failed to receive a plentiful supply, but that it will highly gratify my friend in whose composition there is so great a portion of the “Milk of human kindness;” in finding that not only the necessities of this poor forlorn stranger were supplied, but many would gladly have alleviated that load of mental distress he seemed to labour under, if it had been in their power.

Yours, &c.

LETTER II.

BURLINGTON COUNTY,

June, 1780.

Dear Friend,

The wood in which he took up his abode, hath its north side bounded by the road leading from Mount-Holly to the city of Burlington, distant four miles from the latter, and a little more than two from the former, in which is yet to be seen the tree (a white oak of great dimensions) under the south side of which he formed his subterranean lodgment. The

aperture by which he descended, was in an oblique direction for about three feet and a half, when it entered the body of his cave, the form of which was an oval, but so much circumscribed in its dimensions that he could scarcely stretch himself at length in it. This circumstance was not known till after his death, when a partial descent was absolutely necessary to free the cave of that body which had occupied it so long, for he had spent twenty-three years there, during all which time he had no use of fire.

This would seem so incredible, that I should be afraid to assert it, were there not hundreds who can attest the same.

The aperture he shielded from the rain, &c. by bark laid from the body

of the tree, and which reached to a pole supported by forked sticks let into the ground. His spring was situated about forty rods from his cave in a southerly direction. The convenience of which doubtless suggested the idea of settling here. For although it is a sequestered place, being impervious to view from the road, by a thick growth of underwood, yet it is not so captivating a spot as some might choose. And those persons who (from the fascinating description in romantic story of the neatness of a hermitage and the delightful situation, in which all that is included in the best selected language to convey ideas the most bewitching to imagination, is called to their aid,) may expect gratification of a like nature in my account, they

will be much disappointed. For I have no materials, if I was ever so capable and ever so much inclined to embellish my account without having recourse to fiction, but in detailing the life of the Mount-Holly-Hermit, that does not come within my plan.

I do not remember that the public knew any thing of his reasons for living in this retired way, until perhaps six weeks or two months after his arrival, Col. Charles Read spoke to him through an old German Linguist, and requested to know where he was from, and his motive in secluding himself from society. When he gave the following short account. "His name was Francis Adam Joseph Phyle, that he was a native of the Canton of Lucern in Switzerland, which, on account of some

disagreeable circumstances taking place, he had left, and went to France, with whose troops, after some length of time intervening, he had come to Canada, but was, soon after his arrival, from disgust to the life of a Soldier determined to leave them, and throw himself on the mercy of his enemies. That accordingly he effected an escape, came on southward until he reached here, where he wished to remain."

Col. Read who was one of the Judges of the Supreme Court, after hearing his story without pressing him to enter into the particulars thereof, told him he should have liberty to reside in the wood, and recommended him to the charity of the people, saying that he appeared to be labouring under great distress of

mind, and wished he might not receive any abuse in the country he had adopted. The Colonel was susceptible of very tender impressions, and of course when he saw a person totally a stranger to the country and its language, whose behaviour bespoke him to be a man of good breeding and who not only was destitute of every of the comforts of life, and strenuously persisted in refusing pecuniary aid when ever offered, and at the same time appearing under a great weight of mental distress, occasioned, (as he said) by his sins which appeared to overwhelm him with a deep sense of their turpitude, and wishing to expiate them in solitude, by foregoing all the enjoyments of this life. All this was more than Col. Read could behold

without dropping a sympathetic tear, giving place to a compassionate sigh and sincerely pitying the miserable stranger. His kindness to Francis, (by which name I shall for the future distinguish him,) may well be supposed to act as a cordial to his distressed mind. For as he had been a soldier he did not know but that he should be forced into the British army, who were then at war with its great rival power, whose mutual animosities have kept the world in confusion for more than three hundred years. But his fears were happily relieved from all danger of again entering into scenes, than which death would have been more welcome.

After this interview between the Colonel and Francis, the latter returned with hasty step to his retreat, from

which he had been absent on a little excursion after provisions, and might have experienced comparative happiness had not the corroding reflections of his guilty breast thrown in an allay. For he has since acknowledged that his guilty fears followed him to his solitude. It does not with certainty appear that he had any other than the common failings of humanity to bewail: Though indeed it was believed upon something that once fell from him in conversation that he had killed a man in a duel. However that may be, it is enough for us to know that in his own opinion, his sins were of such a cast as to preclude him the privilege of partaking any more of the comforts of this life. And it would be well if we all knew that the common failings

of mankind are sufficient to produce in the ingenious mind the most poignant grief. And many there has been who have been in great distress in being favoured with a true sight of their condition, when their worldly neighbours have thought them very weak to indulge such whimsies, and have laughed at their sorrows. “But they would do well to beware how they ridicule, or speak lightly of such distressing perplexities; far better would it be for them that they were in the same condition.”

Yours, &c.

LETTER III.

BURLINGTON COUNTY.

July, 1780.

Dear Friend,

I told you that strong convictions pursued Francis to his solitude. He had before sought to silence them, by a voluptuous gratification of the sensual appetites, both in his own country and afterwards in France,

among a people well calculated both by nature and habit to contribute their full quota of those blandishments which are best adapted to stupefy the awakened mind. But he found that however sedulous his own endeavours joined with the seductive arts of that volatile people, to lessen the poignancy of his feelings, that his conscience would, as in the "Cool of the day," arrest his progress in the emphatic language of "Man, where art thou;" when finding it to be impossible to procure peace in such a way, he had at length the wisdom to flee from such a course, and endeavour to obtain it by another medium; which shews that he was favoured with a proper sense of his condition.

And though we do entertain much charity for him, in his thinking to ex-

piate his crimes by great austerity and rigid mortification, we may at the same time without a breach thereof, withhold our belief of there being any merit attached to such voluntary acts, and assert the inefficacy thereof unless accompanied by a total change in the mind, will and affections, which is emphatically called a new birth, and without which, a victory over that leprosy of sin that is entwined into every fibre of the soul, will not be experienced.

I think no one from what I have written can mistake my meaning, and infer that I have uncharitable thoughts of those who have made choice of the ascetic life. To cut off all possible occasion for such conclusion, I will freely declare, that if I had been ignorant of all those who

have devoted their lives to retirement, except Thomas A. Kempis, and Alban Butler, their writings alone, would abundantly convince me that a man could be truly great and good, and at the same time hold principles which we as protestants assent not unto ; but to return.

It being now generally known that Francis had taken up his abode in the wood, he began to have visitors, and as he attained some knowledge of their language could discriminate between those whose visits proceeded from laudable motives, and those of vacant minds led there by idle curiosity.

To the first, whose questions were always guided by humanity, he would answer with politeness, and if indeed it could be said that he was

sometimes evasive, he could not be charged with a departure from that good breeding which was so distinguished a trait in his character.

But to those of the latter class, whose questions were frequently improper and sometimes insolent, he would remain silent or speak in a language they did not understand. And this he would do with great facility : For if a German would pursue him from the German to the French, he would then speak in Latin, Spanish or Italian, each of which I have been told, he could pronounce as well as his vernacular tongue.

There were others, whose questions, though not of the tenor of those last mentioned, yet were evidently not agreeable to him, as being concerning the war just commenced,

the relative strength of the two nations, and of the probable way it would result. These things were discordant to the mind of a poor creature, who wished not only to have nothing to do with such scenes, but to forget if possible, what he had heretofore known of them.

His subterranean abode, was lined with cast clothes which the charity of the people supplied : It was as before said so contracted in size that he could not stretch himself at his length, consequently was obliged to lay in a curve-line, which must be acknowledged to have been a very disagreeable position during his long abode there, and would have drawn forth a greater share of our sympathy if he had been precluded the privilege of enlarging it. The clothes he

lined it with, was continually imbibing moisture, which rendered it necessary frequently to take them from his lodge and spread them on the bushes that it might be exhaled by the rays of the sun.

When they were worn out, or for the above reason had become unfit for use, he found no difficulty in replacing them with others ; so that he was in greater danger of suffering from the heat of summer than the cold of the winter.

But the unpleasantness of his situation during the summer nights might have been remedied, if he had slept above ground, under the awning which he had juttred from the wind-fall to shield as before mentioned the mouth of his cave from the wet and which extended to some

length along the body of the tree. This indeed might have been esteemed a luxury ; but for that very reason he determined not to avail himself of the advantage such a lodging presented, but chose to suffer in his lodge. Not indeed but that he spent a good portion of his nocturnal hours above ground, for his vigils were as rigid as is usual with others who devote their lives to retirement, but that he would not indulge himself in sleeping anywhere but in his lodgment underground. Which is but one instance of a hundred that could be produced in proof of his willingly denying himself all the comforts of this life, and confining himself to an austerity that to many may seem incredible, but is nevertheless true. And those persons who were acquainted with the

offers that were afterwards made him, which will be noticed in due time, will not fail to acknowledge that his retiring from the world, arose from a full persuasion that it was his duty. And it appeared evident to those with whom in after years he would freely converse, it arose not on the one hand, as some weakly imagined, from an insuperable dislike to an active life, nor on the other, from an apathy inherent in his nature : For he had, as might be supposed from his accomplishments, been bred amidst the elegancies of life, knew how to enjoy, and had freely partook thereof.

In good weather he was always seen walking in the path that led to his spring, with great alertness, which he kept very clean by sweeping it

with a bunch of twigs kept for the purpose, and was rendered very hard by his constant walking in it.

In this path he spent many of his nocturnal hours—In what way did he occupy his thoughts? In giving scope to his imagination, and bringing those gay scenes to his remembrance with which the men of the world are so captivated? No, Impossible! that he employed his thoughts in such way, unless to contrast the poor gratifications such scenes yield, with those pleasures he enjoyed in his retirement. For here, in a clear evening, when the bright expanse was lighted up by all its shining luminaries, if those scenes should, I had almost said sacrilegiously usurp a place in his thoughts, he could instantly dispossess them by an happy recur-

rence to that aid flowing from faith
which taught him that

“The soul of man was made to walk
the skies,
Delightful outlet of her prison here !
There, disincumbered from her
chains, the ties
Of toys, terrestrial, she can rove at
large ;
There freely can respire, dilate, ex-
tend,
In full proportion let loose all her
powers.”*

And in consequence thereof, his
pleasures were of that rational kind,
arising from his duly appreciating the
vast disparity between the grovelling
pleasures which are derived from

* Young.

sensual enjoyments, and those which flow to the contemplative mind, whose thoughts are not how they may acquire the means to ensure them wealth or power, but the transcendently more rational enquiry how they may obtain the "One thing needful," a home beyond the skies.

Therefore the charitable and unprejudiced will not think it unlikely his language was frequently in his lonely walks quite in unison with the following beautiful words of the poet :

"Father of light ! and life ! Thou
 Good Supreme !
 O teach me what is good ! teach me
 Thyself !
 Save me from Folly, Vanity and Vice,

From every low pursuit! and feed
 my soul
 With knowledge, conscious peace,
 and virtue pure;
 Sacred, substantial, never-fading
 bliss!"*

You will please to pardon me for the length of my digressions, for in giving a short account of poor Francis, I shall think if any thing should occur by which there may arise a hope that but an individual person may receive benefit, I shall be justified in claiming a portion of that candour, which I claim as the condition on which only I could consent to comply with your wishes.

Yours, &c.

* Thompson

LETTER IV.

BURLINGTON COUNTY,

July, 1780.

Dear Friend,

Francis would never leave his habitation while he had any thing remaining in his sack, but when his provisions were exhausted, he would take his staff and go among his nearest neighbours; at another time to

Mount-Holly ; then to Burlington or the surrounding villages : It would seem by his conduct herein, as though he thought it was most proper to receive his supplies in rotation from the people all around him, thinking thereby to avoid being burdensome : But his care in that respect, although it evinced him to be a man possessing great modesty and delicacy, certainly was misplaced, for I never heard of his meeting with any difficulty in obtaining a supply.

Upon his arrival at a house, he would salute the people in a way that at once bespoke him to be far above the level of common mendicants---having made them a low bow, while holding his hat in one hand would lay the other on his breast, in a most impressive manner, and ask them for

some bread in an accent very remote from meanness, and with a deportment that might well be called dignified, without any mixture of pride or insolence. And after receiving what they pleased to give, though it should be ever so indifferent, for he made choice of the worst kind, thinking it the most suitable for him, would then kiss their friendly hand, still preserving that admirable mixture of humility and dignity. And would never forget to express some short ejaculations as they were supposed to be, being uttered in Latin, and at intervals kissing his crucifix which always hung on his breast suspended from his neck by a ribbon.

A few years previous to the present war, the United Brethren or (as they are commonly called) Mora-

vians, hearing at Bethlehem, there was such a recluse person here, they, agreeable to that philanthropy and benevolence which so highly distinguish them as a people, thought to add to his happiness by sending a deputation of three of the brethren to invite him to remove to Bethlehem and live with them, where, he was told, he might live in his own way, and as retired as he pleased. But they did not succeed in their mission : For he had fully made up his mind on that subject, and all their kind endeavours were ineffectual to persuade him to relinquish his beloved retirement. And when we find that to be the case, the benevolent mind cannot help regretting that such was his inflexible determination ; for those who have any know-

ledge of the "Brethren," will not doubt but great exertions would have been made to alleviate his distress, and those exertions directed by good judgment too. And it confessedly requires much judgment to give advice in such cases that may be profitable to the subjects of it.

Strangers, led by curiosity to see Francis, would upon seeing the manner in which he lived, find a most powerful appeal to their compassion, and would frequently try to get him to receive money, but it is believed they never once succeeded, he always stoically refusing every pecuniary aid. But I am glad, notwithstanding his refusal, to have it in my power to record such incidents, as reflecting honour on them for their benevolent intentions, and at the same

time as it will contribute to the satisfaction of those who delight in contemplating the brighter side of things.

Although I have to record a flagrant act of cruelty exercised on the person of Francis, yet the general tenor of his life was quiet and unruffled, and he frequently had an opportunity to see that his hard fate drew the tender sympathy of many, who would have rejoiced if they could have administered consolation to his distressed mind. And are we to suppose that all such charitable endeavours were altogether fruitless? Or may we not more reasonably suppose, that their kind attempts, when managed with that tenderness and delicacy, which the feeling heart aided by the benign influences of religion can inspire, were sometimes successful?

O ! yes, I had much rather believe this to be the case ; and that he could have told some of those who endeavoured to soothe the anguish of his mind, that he found the keenness of it to abate, and his corroding reflections allayed. And at some peculiar seasons he could look forward and find the most joyful feelings to pervade the whole man, in anticipating that time when “ All tears were to be wiped from all eyes,” and feel like a new creature indeed, when all and every of the malignant passions were annihilated or more properly repressed. For we must suppose those prelibations of happiness were of no long continuance, and accordingly we find his distress would return and precipitate him into that horror, which

he thought a proper punishment for him.

Oh! that all may be induced to let the sufferings of Francis operate as a check to the motions of pride and anger. For if we admit the truth of the report which made him the murderer of one in a *dûel*, we may reasonably expect pride, anger or resentment, and probably an assemblage of all three, backed by foul envy and fell revenge were the leading cause of his precipitation into that abyss of misery and pungent sorrow, and that protracted to the end of his life.

But the motions of pride, envy, malice, guile and deceit, with all the filthy brood of carnal affections which are either generally or partially, received into the breast of every man

(though through restraining grace they may but seldom drive to acts of murder) yet in their effects produce such a total alienation to that holiness, without which, none shall see the Lord, that it is most sorrowful to reflect upon. And when by the touches of divine grace the madness of a course of life always consequent on an unresisted reception of such malignant passions is fully seen, there will arise such pungent distress, that crowns and sceptres would be willingly parted with could they obtain perfect peace.

Such is the deformity of sin ! and such is the consequence of a partial persisting therein. But the consequence of an obstinate adherence thereto may be gathered by I had almost said reason, and certainly I may

say reason when aided and enlightened by that grace (a portion of which has entered the heart of every man) which will point to the dreadful punishment that necessarily takes place on a separation of the soul from the body when it will fall into its own proper hell, described in scripture by the never dying worm, which is apprehended to mean the corroding thoughts and anguishing reflections in finding there will be an eternal separation between the soul and the Supreme Good. “And the reason
 “ why the unregenerate do not feel
 “ themselves in such a state of woe
 “ and torment in this life is, because
 “ the soul, during its union with the
 “ body, qualifies or unites with the
 “ gratifications of sense, the cheering
 “ influences of the sun, and other

“satisfactions of outward nature,
 “which charm its misery for the
 “present; but that upon this consti-
 “tution being dissolved, and all its
 “communication with the animal life
 “ceasing, then the soul so unre-
 “deemed looses every source of miti-
 “gation and comfort, and falls into
 “its own proper hell”* as aforesaid.

This may be but a gloomy sub-
 ject to some, “But it is better to re-
 “flect on it for a few minutes, than
 “to endure it to eternal ages, per-
 “haps the consideration of the mis-
 “eries of the wicked may be profi-
 “tably terrible, may teach us to flee
 “to the Saviour, “Who delivers
 “from going down into the bottom-
 “less pit,” may drive like the aven-

“gers sword, to the only city of refuge
 “for obnoxious sinners,”† viz. the
 blood of the everlasting covenant.

Yours, &c.

† Hervey.

LETTER V.

BURLINGTON COUNTY,

September, 1780.

Dear Friend,

Though I have said a good deal concerning the manner Francis received his supplies of food, I will give an account of another source whence a considerable quantity flowed, and which in good measure superseded the necessity of traversing

his usual rounds : And this was the visits of children, who frequently as a stipulation of, and reward for good behaviour, were permitted to go and see him when they were always provided with something for him to eat. Their parents learning the reason of his retirement, found those sensations which were excited by the novelty of the circumstance, give place to those which may be traced to pity and compassion, and would encourage their children to behave well that they might go and see Francis, whose visits were commonly productive of profit to him. Though it must be confessed their natural loquacity did so ill accord with his turn and manner, their visits were rather troublesome to him. However, he would kiss the hand of each of them and an-

swer their artless interrogatories with as much patience, as could be reasonably expected from him, who was extremely irritable, inheriting from nature a choleric disposition. But this trait in his character, would never have appeared to us if this country could boast of what none ever could, viz. an exemption from boorish people: Some few of such have at times visited him, whose religious education differed from his, if indeed it could be said such creatures ever had a religious education, who could be so cruel as to make a helpless and inoffensive man, think the religion of his fathers and which he held as most sacred, was scandalized by the treatment he received from them. For with that carelessness and indifference which Francis

could not bear, they would handle his crucifix, at the same time asking him questions, the nature of which tended to irritate. This indeed would instantly raise his choler to an high degree and draw forth anathemas on their (as he thought) devoted heads and uttered in a most awful manner. And as I have spoken favourably of Francis heretofore, I still wish to do so, and when I undertake, not to exculpate, but extenuate those traits in his character, which I acknowledge were as foils to his brighter virtues, give me liberty to press on your remembrance that superstition which you so freely charge to him, and so fondly think yourself exempt from, and then ask yourself whether any evil tempters drawn from their lurking places, in consequence

of the worst treatment he could possibly receive, would have merited excuse or palliation as well as this. For my part I think seriously, that a Roman Catholic (allowance being made for the prejudice of education) is more intitled to our charity for their ill tempers, consequent on such behaviour, than a protestant is in any case. But difference of education out of the question, I contend that Francis may, in adverting to his extreme irritability, receive a share of our charity as well as others. Martin Luther for instance, was a "Man of like passions with ourselves," and was much under the dominion of ill tempers. And yet who goes to detract from his venerable character on account thereof? I could mention others too, who were great men in

their day, who laboured sorely under the like infirmity.

The truth of the matter lays here, that people attatch virtues to things that in their nature are not so, and on the contrary are for denying a person the name of christian, upon some sudden exhibition of infirmity, when that probably, is the burden of his soul, and his daily cries are, that he may be delivered therefrom.

I have seen people who have been remarkable for an equable, serene, unruffled temper, and called on account thereof religious people, who I believe were at the same time strangers to true religion. “Many mistake nature for grace and so rest short of a true change. The tempering make a vast difference in many blades, all made of the same metal, some

“ of which will bend before they
 “ break, others break before they
 “ bend. Good nature, without grace,
 “ maketh a fairer shew than grace
 “ with an evil nature. A cur out-
 “ runs a greyhound if the latter has
 “ a clog.”*

If I pertinently introduce quotations I need not fear blame, because my selections so far surpass any thing my pen can produce, therefore will trouble you with the following, wrote by a man of very different sentiments with regard to some points of doctrine, from the man just quoted from, but notwithstanding said difference, I believe them both, to have been men of great piety, and singular usefulness.

* Fletcher.

“ A double quantity of real grace,
 “ if I may so speak, that has a dou-
 “ ble quantity of hinderance to con-
 “ flict with, will not be easily observ-
 “ ed, unless these hinderances are
 “ likewise known and attended to,
 “ and a smaller measure of grace
 “ may appear great when its exer-
 “ cise meets with no remarkable ob-
 “ struction. For these reasons, we
 “ can never be competent judges of
 “ each other, because we cannot be
 “ acquainted with the whole complex
 “ case. But our Merciful High
 “ Priest knows the whole, he con-
 “ siders our frame, remembers that
 “ we are but dust, makes gracious
 “ allowances, pities, bears, accepts,
 “ and approves with unerring judg-
 “ ment.”*

* John Newton.

Let it not be thought I have a light esteem of good nature. Indeed I have a just esteem of gentleness of disposition, and think it a great benefit to its possessor, in a merely civil point of view, for he will glide through life with far less difficulty, escaping numberless broils, to which the man of irritable tempers will be daily liable to, and the people of his neighbourhood, will duly appreciate advantages derived from an habitual intercourse with him. And if it is so highly commendable from merely human motives, as contributing to that serenity and quiet so delightful among neighbours, how will, or how can we do justice in describing it when it meets in the same person. that divine grace which when not resisted, but suffered to expand and

producing, as it infallibly will, those excellent fruits, viz. knowledge, temperance, godliness, brotherly-kindness and charity.

The man in whose breast these have taken root, is a prince among men, and is in forwardness for eternal bliss, where he will arrive in due time, if his faith fail not. When the merely good natured man will fall short.

I have been the more lengthy on this subject, because that pharasaic-leaven, so hateful in every age, is alive in this, and great stress is laid, by many on outside things, and think all is well, if they can live free from any thing that will injure their credit among men. But the christian, let him belong to what class or society he may, has different views. He

knows indeed that it is indispensably necessary to live free from those things which may wound his credit as a man : And that he must attend to many little things which the christian life embraces, and which, in their nature are subservient to the grand and ultimate object he has in view. But all this though ever so beautiful, and however useful in constituting the basis of that good character which however the cynic may despise, is confessedly not to be overlooked by any man of good sense. All this he does, but he does it because divine grace, now took root in his heart, has made a contrary course hateful to him, being favoured to see the extremely opposite nature thereof, to perfect purity, which purity he now strives to imitate according to his

measure or capacity, amidst the imperfections and infirmities of his nature; which infirmities, his faith gives him good reason to hope, will be weakened by obedience to that grace now shed abroad in his heart, and which teaches him to do those things now, as being agreeable to the divine nature. Whereas he formerly wrought them, (as the works of all hypocrites are) with sinister views, and selfish designs.

Yours, &c.

LETTER VI.

BURLINGTON COUNTY,

October, 1780.

Dear Friend,

It is painful to me in the recital, as it will be to you in the perusal, of those things evincive of the brutality of the persons who behaved so unworthy as related in my last. But that I may consistent with that truth which is the basis of these letters, in-

sert every incident connected with the life of Francis, I shall now relate a cruel act committed on him. And I shall not merit the title of impartial, if I let any thing slip, through a bias to the people among whom he lived, or through my fears that the sensibilities of your nature should be excited on the perusal.

Francis never after his arrival here shaved his beard, indeed he always clipped with a small pair of scissors that part which grew near his mouth, but that on his cheeks and chin grew to a very considerable length. This, though to you from your neighbourhood to Ephrata, whose inhabitants, invariably exhibit this appearance, from an inhibition coeval with their becoming a separate society, is no novel thing, but here it was other-

wise, and was regarded by the multitude with that idiot stare, which is common to their rank in every country. However this subjected him to no inconvenience, for he cared but little in what light they regarded the singularity, while they kept their hands from it, but this I am sorry to say, in one instance was not the case, for some rude wicked boys living in a village near Mountholly, followed him, threw him down and sacrilegiously (if I may so term it, and joined with a cruelty unworthy of a Mohawk) divested his chin of the appendage, so long pendant from it. And this barbarous act was highly aggravated by the mode adopted in the execution, for instead of taking a pair of scissors, they made use of a clasp-knife, which doubtless caused

great pain to the poor, and by this time aged man, for it is but a few years since the perpetration of the deed.

I remember hearing of this most scandalous transaction at the time, and now, wonder the sensations excited by it were so cold and phlegmatic, and could reflect on it with greater complacency if I had shewed a marked disapprobation of the execrable deed, and have nothing to plead, in excuse of the supineness, criminal supineness of the people in neglecting to ascertain who were the actors in the nefarious business and punishing them for it.

I knew a person, who, when a boy, in company with some others of like age, visited him, and like those unthoughtful creatures mentioned in

my last, carelessly took hold of his crucifix, when instantly Francis in his zeal to avenge the affront, spit in his face; this in turn called forth the boy's ire, when lifting his foot to the breast of Francis, kicked him over, for which I have heard this person express great sorrow, saying he wished it never had happened. So easy is it, for us, through unwatchfulness, and the sudden impulse of passion, to commit acts that may give us long and great uneasiness.

Since the death of Francis I have often thought it strange I did not try to do him more service, and think it equally strange that those who possessed more ample means, did not more strenuously insist upon rendering his life more comfortable, for though I have acknowledged they were kind

to him, yet I think there should have been strong arguments, a reiteration of arguments, to induce him to suffer them to make him more comfortable ; their neglect herein can be attributed to nothing but that “ Their charity was more fervid than active.” They would always give him victuals, an old coat or blanket, or even money, if he could have been prevailed upon to receive it. But to go and insist that if he would not leave his beloved retirement, he should suffer them to build a small hut for him, this I never heard was attempted. But what is very surprising, that notwithstanding the hardships he suffered in such a damp situation, and never having any fire to warm his benumbed limbs, at the same time, being of a small size, delicate

frame and texture of body, he should enjoy almost uninterrupted health, which was really the case, and can be attributed to nothing short of the superintending providence of Him who "Tempers the wind to the shorn lamb."

Indeed, if we properly consider his being pent up in his little subterranean lodge, a long winters night, and turning out in the morning with his clothes all wet, we can hardly conceive any situation more distressing, and terrible as we should think our fate to be, if endured but one week, in that manner. He who once mixed with the gay and polite, and was blessed with the endearing conversation of his friends and relatives, passed twenty-three long winters there. When I now think of him, as being

coiled up, in his dreary abode, I wonder much he was not oftener the subject of our commiseration, and can account for the apathy to the afflictions and poverty of others because not immediately presented to view.

“ Ah ! little think the gay, licentious,
proud,

“ Whom pleasure, power, and
affluence surround ;

“ They who their thoughtless hours
in giddy mirth,

“ And wanton, often cruel riot waste ;

“ Ah ! little think they, while they
dance along,

“ How many feel, this very moment
death,

“ And all the sad variety of pain ;

“ How many sink in the devouring
flood.

- “ Or more devouring flame? how
 many bleed
 “ By shameful variance betwixt man
 and man!
 “ How many pine in want and dun-
 geon glooms,
 “ Shut from the common air, and
 common use
 “ Of their own limbs! how may drink
 the cup
 “ Of baleful grief, or eat the bitter
 bread
 “ Of misery! Sore pierced by win-
 try winds.
 “ How many sink into the sordid hut
 “ Of cheerless poverty! How many
 shake
 “ With all the fiercer tortures of the
 mind.
 “ How many rack’d with honest pas-
 sions, droop,

- “ In deep retired distress ! How many stand
 “ Around the death-bed of their
 dearest friends,
 “ And point the parting anguish !
 Think fond man
 “ Of these, and all the nameless ills
 “ That one incessant struggle render
 life
 “ One scene of toil, of suffering, and
 of fate ;
 “ Vice in its high career would stand
 appall’d,
 “ And heedless rambling impulse
 learn to think ;
 “ The conscious heart of charity
 would warm,
 “ And her wide wish, benevolence
 dilate ;
 “ The social tear would rise, the so-
 cial sigh ;

- “ And into clear perfection gradual
bliss
“ Refining still, the social passions
work.”*

Yours, &c.

* Thompson.

LETTER VII.

BURLINGTON COUNTY.

October, 1780.

Dear Friend,

Francis was not fitted by nature to undergo labour, and if he had been endowed with strength, (if we consider the state of his afflicted mind) to have withheld provisions from him under the notion that by so doing, he

would be compelled to take to some kind of labour, would have been inconsistent with the ideas of humanity and benevolence, which in this enlightened age seem to be generally entertained, and have savored more of that cold prudential disposition (to speak as lightly as possible of it) which actuates too many it is to be feared, in their refusal to contribute to the necessities of others, and who are like the horse leach at the vein, crying give, give, and are never satisfied unless they are accumulating the dross of this world, notwithstanding they have been told an hundred times, of the impossibility of obtaining happiness in such a way, yet they are striving, unremittingly striving night and day, and eating the bread of carefulness, that their own expe-

rience (as it would seem) should contradict the sayings of the wise of all ages, and also the scriptures themselves, which abundantly inculcate the belief, nay, roundly assert as a fact, that riches are not the chief good, upon possession whereof every thing else should be added.

I suppose, all that could be alleged in favour of denying him food, would be, that it was encouraging him in idleness, and that he ought not to eat if he did not work, agreeable to Paul's inhibition, I grant that if Francis had been able to work, and had been exempt from distress of mind, it might have been right to withhold food from him. And I grant it is the duty, the indispensable duty of people universally to be employed in some way for the good of society.

And probably Francis thought, the mode of living he had adopted might operate in that way. And who can tell but it did? we are poor short-sighted creatures, and our capacities are very limited, and my knowledge thereof, forbids my saying there has no good devolved upon the community, at least some individual thereof, it may be, we know not who, yet such may be the fact.

As to people being^{*} of use, if all were denied the necessaries of life, that could not make it appear they had been of more use to society than Francis, I am afraid many would have but short commons. For the same complaint or observation applies in our days, as did at Rome in the days of Horace, who above sixteen

hundred years ago, complained in the following lines, as translated into English by Dr. Watts, That

- “ There are a number of us creep
 “ Into the world to eat and and sleep,
 “ And know no reason why they’re
 born,
 “ But merely to consume the corn,
 “ Devour the cattle, fowl and fish,
 “ And leave behind an empty dish,
 “ The crows and ravens do the same,
 “ Unlucky birds of hateful name ;
 “ Ravens or crows might fill their
 place,
 “ And swallow corn and carcasses.
 “ Then if their tomb-stone when they
 die,
 “ Ben’t taught to flatter or to lie,
 “ There’s nothing better will be said,

Than that they've eat up all their
bread,
Drank up their drink, and gone
to bed."

Thus I have related the general tenor of the life of Francis, in which there was a large portion of mortification and self-denial. And without entering into a disquisition, on the merits of a total abstraction from the world, and all its fascinating pleasures, in order to avert the wrath of the Deity, or on the criminality of an individual, who by such abstraction, contributes not towards that mass of happiness, which divine goodness, doubtless is well pleased to see his creatures enjoy, and who collectively have a right to the individual exertions of every man to further the

same: I will not hesitate to express a belief that Francis enjoyed a greater portion of real happiness, than is within the lot of many, who carry themselves aloft, amidst a gaping throng, and are highly gratified if they can raise the envy of the multitude, by their daily exhibitions of splendor, and show things which Francis had learned heartily to despise, from a conviction that they could not supply that true inward peace and quiet conscience, which he ardently sought, and which are the best criterions, to judge of the death of that body of sin, with which every man either is, or hath been fettered, and which cannot be obtained but by, and through true faith, in that "Fountain which was opened at Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness." And a subsequent

and faithful adherence to that portion of grace, which hath in mercy been given to every man, and of course every woman for they are all one in Christ, to guide them in the way they should walk ; and would by a steady obedience to its dictates have preserved us from that vortex of sin and misery, which by actual compliance to that stimulus which devolved on us by fatal inheritance from our first parents, hath involved us in, and from the deadning and benumbing effects thereof, there is no way under heaven, appointed for our escape, but through the laver of regeneration and a new birth unto righteousness, which is not experienced but by frequent ablutions in that “ Fountain” above mentioned, which is a most beautiful metaphor, and is

allusive of that all powerful cleansing, which true faith in the Redeemer brings to light in the soul.

And though Francis might be wading in the gloom of error, yet as he was conscious of the turpitude of his crimes, and sought by every means in his power to avert the punishment he thought they justly merited, by an inflexible determination to deny himself a participation of the comforts of this life, believing thereby to expiate the sins he groaned under. We may, I think, without any great display of that charity which surpasseth all the other virtues, have a hope that Francis is at rest, being forgiven for the sake of Him whose sufferings was his daily contemplation; which I had rather call the true intent and meaning of the regard he

paid to the little representation which hung on his breast, and which seems to imply from the name monitiary, therefore I would much rather think the intent was to call the substance to his recollection, than to attach the harsh name of idolatry to the respect he paid it.

I hope I shall not subject myself to rebuke, for the above remarks. I think that the introduction of monitiary crucifixes into places devoted to religious uses, and having them attached to the persons of any, is radically wrong, and cannot be defended on scriptural grounds. Yet all this will not preclude me the liberty of believing that many, very many of the Roman Catholics, though they are in possession of each his, or her crucifix, are nevertheless persons of true

piety, as much so, as many who see the absurdity of all such supposed helps.

It remains for me to relate, that Francis never after his arrival here, shewed any desire to be informed how, in what way, or where the war of '56 was carried on, evincing strongly by his conduct herein, that such things were foreign from his thoughts. And the same incurious turn of mind has been observed in the present war, save, that at near the commencement of it, observing an unusual stir among the people, (troops marching and countermarching,) he went to his hospitable landlord, who was his nearest neighbour, and enquired who were the principals engaged in it, and the cause thereof, and it was observed that he seldom or never spoke of it

afterwards, not even in the memorable winter of '76 and '77, when the British troops overrun Jersey, for then a partial action took place between a detachment from the American army, and two regiments commanded by the Baron Donop, the scene of action was near the dwelling of Francis, but he never left his habitation until all was still, which was the case in a few days, when he crept out, being forced thereto by hunger, but never enquired any thing concerning the fray. No, Francis was happily delivered from all anxiety concerning how it might terminate, thinking it best for him to let the potsherds of the earth smite each other.

And had much rather sing in his

solitary walks, through the wood, to the following tenor:

“When e’er I take my walks abroad,”
 O’er wood or field or grove,
 I contemplate thy works O Lord,
 And find that thou art love.

Whether I sing, or pray or praise,
 My heart is fix’d on thee,
 And when thou viewest this lower
 world,
 O Lord remember me.

Than to occupy his precious time in conversing on subjects which we may reasonably suppose from his silence thereon, he could not think of but with abhorrence.

And indeed when I think of the fate of the Baron Donop, above

mentioned, who with six hundred Hessian grenadiers fell at Red-Bank, about three years ago, I cannot refrain from telling you that I have fell out with the whole trade of war; for I saw the Baron (and the regiment, a great part of which fell with him,) at Mount-Holly in December '76, he appeared to me to possess much urbanity and good nature, being less haughty in his manners than any officer of rank I ever saw, and when we reflect that he and his brave followers came to this country at the will of their sovereign, to fight against those they had had no quarrel with, it appears most sorrowful indeed. But it is said that Baron Donop was a brave man, and died gloriously; sounding things these, and doubtless, many to emulate his bravery, will advance to the can-

non's mouth and be blown to atoms.

If my dear Melchior, you will look into history and see the devastation there has been made, and the rivers of blood there has been spilt on the plains of Germany, ill fated country ! you will excuse me if I paint the misery war entails, eternally entails on thousands, for though charity constrains us to allow there may have been many virtuous men in the field of battle : yet it is to be feared the far greater part are of a contrary character.

But dear friend, my paper will allow no more, therefore will bid you adieu.

Yours, &c.

LETTER VIII.

BURLINGTON COUNTY

November, 1780.

Dear Friend,

I undertook in my last to paint some of the horrors attendant on that greatest of scourges, war!

“From whence come wars and fightings”? They may always be traced either immediately from Satan, by his transfusing his own nature into

the sons of men, fell malice, envy, rage and revenge. Or more remotely to numerous causes, which the degenerate sons of Adam by the aid of that sophistry which Satan is always ready to supply, soften into names alluring, but which however, claim him for their father. And there is no sight on the earth so congenial to him, as two embattled hosts in all the pomp of martial array, advancing to bury their bayonets in the bowels of each other, they regard at some little distance their enemies, a dreadful pause takes place, and while they are every moment expecting the word to be given, their blood rolls with impetuous tide through their distended veins, their breasts heaving, and their eyes darting fire like the Hyena's, and now the word, probably some blas-

phemous expression, such as "God and our king," is sounded through the embattled host, accompanied by the shrill clarions martial sound, when, but stop my pen, pourtray not the deeds excited first by Satan, and carried into execution by mistaken mortals animated by the furies, for imagination will do enough, without thy aid, in painting the horrors of the day.

And if your stout hearts would have been appaled by the savage acts of the infuriated multitude, how will the tender sympathies of your nature be moved in beholding the group of mourners whose prospects of earthly happiness are forever fled?

First comes the tender father supporting the tottering steps of the wife of his youth. Then ye aged couple! ye have heard that he who was

the only support, all that stood between you and the cold chill of poverty is no more ! now alas ! bereft of your only prop, your grey hairs must descend with sorrow to the grave !

And now thou once loved and loving wife, but now pale widow, how can I paint the sorrows of thy breast ? Thy husband, thy much loved husband, torn from thy arms and dragged from all he holds most dear, his beloved wife and lisping prattlers, dragged to the murderous scene, which heretofore only to hear of, his tender soul would always revolt from, with horror, poor unfortunate woman, alas ! thy foreboding fears are sadly realized, for thy James is a clay cold corpse, his temple is pierced by the fatal ball.

And thou, thou lovely looking

virgin, dost thou also belong to the mournful throng? Ah! I need not ask, for upon thy nearer approach, I see thy grief depicted in every feature. Dear girl, thou wert always cheerful and gay until that ill fated evening, when thy William was forced from thee, alas! thy case is singularly afflictive, for thee and thy William had plighted your vows, and one week more would have seen the blushing maid give her hand to the manly youth who was his parents joy, and the pride of the village throng; but now, thou and thy William art forever separated, for he is numbered with those who swell the conqueror's brow, who has already sent, exultingly sent a list of the slain to his sovereign, who has given orders that the churches shall resound with Te

Deums, giving thanks for the death of thy William and his hapless companions.

But will indeed He who by the mouth of one of his servants hath said "God is not" with impunity "mocked," will he be delighted with their rejoicing? No! the God of Heaven turns his eyes from their vile pagantry. He regards their religious mockery with anger, and it is of his tender mercy they are not all consumed.

"Ah! will kings forget that they
are men,
" And men that they are brethren,....
Why delight
" In human sacrifice? why burst the
ties

- “Of nature? that should knit their
 souls together
 “In one soft band of amity and love.
 “Father of men was it for this,
 “Thy breath divine, kindled within
 his breast
 “The vital flame? for this, was thy
 fair image
 “Stamp’d on his soul with God-like
 lineaments?
 “For this dominion given him abso-
 lute
 “O’er all thy works, only that he
 might reign
 “Supreme in woe.”*

You will excuse me for dwelling so long on the subject of war, but if, by any thing I could say, the mad

* Porteous, Bishop of London.

career of but one solitary individual might be arrested, and persuaded to forego his desires, to make one in the number of those who rejoice at the shrill clarion and "drums discordant sound," I should not grudge my pains.

But however, whether they will hear or forbear, the purposes of divine goodness will be established, the Messiah's "unsuffering kingdom yet shall come;" and happy will those be, who shall not be found counteracting those principles, which as harbingers, proclaim the certain approach of the glorious day.

But to return to Francis. Although during the time he lived here, his life was one continued scene of suffering, yet they were highly aggravated during the last winter, which

as you very well remember, was uncommonly severe, the great depth of the snow rendered it almost impossible for him to get out among the neighbours, and they kindly and very humanely carried provisions frequently to him. His kind and hospitable landlord, Joseph Burr, took the lead in this business, and it may very well be expected that he who had always been accustomed to order his people to load Francis with provisions whenever he would go to the house, would not neglect him then, when the snow was nearly the depth of three feet on the level, neither did he, but would go with his sleigh and carry him comfortable victuals. Suffer me before I go further, to obviate an objection that will be made to the consistency of my account, for it may be supposed,

his being accommodated with comfortable food, lessened rather than aggravated his sufferings, which is granted, but his sufferings, arose from his being pent up, to use a course simile, like a Ground-hog, during almost all the winter, which we may reasonably suppose, contributed to shorten his days; but he was consistent throughout all his conduct, being of a piece, for as he through life had refused every offer to render his life more tolerable, so now as his age and sufferings increased, he would not accept of the kind invitations of his landlord, when he pressed him to let him take him in his sleigh to his house, where he might have every accommodation his age and weakness required, which

certainly reflects credit on the character of Joseph Burr.*

But the period to all the troubles of Francis was nearly arrived, for upon his landlord visiting him one morning, Francis told him he was sick, which drew forth another invitation to his house, he thanked him (as he always did those who wished to do him a service,) but again for the last time refused, for the next morning, the same person, upon his arrival at the dwelling of Francis, after hailing him aloud, and receiving no answer to his repeated calls, knew that he must be dead ; he then went to Mount-Holly and informed the overseers of the poor, who ordered

* The friends of humanity will be highly gratified in being told, that Joseph Burr during the life of Francis, would not suffer the wood where he resided to be cleared.

a decent coffin to be made and taken to the wood, where the people assembled and took out of the cave the body, and also every thing that could be found therein, which were nothing more than old blankets, a small pair of scissors, with which he clipped his beard, and a blank book, in which he had drew or delineated sundry religious pieces, with a black-lead pencil, found in the book. His body was taken to the friends old burial-ground, near Mount-Holly, and there decently interred: he being about sixty-six years of age; and had spent nearly twenty-three of them in his solitude.

Thus dear Melchior, I have given as full an account of this poor recluse person, as I have been able to obtain, and which I trust will not

be altogether uninteresting to you, notwithstanding, the want of just arrangement, and the desultory manner in which it is written.

I.

The hermits body now is laid,
 To moulder in the grave,
 'That great and solemn debt is paid,
 Which death of all will have.

II.

But the grim tyrant could not sting,
 Our Hermit's, mental part,
 As death approached the more he'd
 sing,
 "Come fling thy pointed dart."

III.

"The grave nor thee, nor both of
 you,
 "I do not fear, not I,

“Thy dart is blunted, and the grave
 “Will have no victory.”

IV.

“And this I sing through faith that
 makes
 “Rough things seem sweet to me,
 “For all my sins, my Jesus takes,
 “He hath my soul set free.

V.

“My sins and stains of scarlet dye,
 “Doth snow resemble well,
 “My crimes although of crimson hue,
 “Are now all made like wool.

VI.

“And all the hardships I have seen,
 “I now think of with pleasure,
 “They’ve been a mean whereby to
 wean,
 “My heart from earthly treasure.”

VII.

And now you young men, come and
tell

If Francis was not wise,
In striving hard his sins to quell,
That he might gain the prize.

VIII.

That prize I mean, which all will
gain,

Who seek it through the blood
Of the High-priest, who once was
slain,
To bring us home to God.

LETTER IX.

BURLINGTON COUNTY,

December, 25th, 1780,

Dear Friend,

Having concluded Francis, I had no expectation of writing at this time.—But as it is Christmas, the time so many, up and down, are revelling and rioting, and spending their precious time, in such way that we may reasonably suppose will prove their utter ruin. I thought I would try to divert my mind by giving you a line. How very different is the Anniversary of the Birth of our Saviour ushered in, in our times, from what it was, when the cry of “Glory to God in the highest, peace on

earth and good will to men," was sounded by those who hailed the auspicious day.—O my dear Melchoir let us remember that,

“ On this distinguished day of grace,
 “ The eternal prince of glory came,
 “ To purge the guilt of human race,
 “ And save them by his powerful
 name.

“ When we in bondage were exil'd,
 “ And rebels to the eternal God,
 “ Our souls with blackest guilt de-
 fil'd,

“ Obnoxious to the impending rod,
 “ That from his seat of perfect bliss,
 “ The son of glory should descend,
 “ To offer man the terms of peace,
 “ And his unbounded grace extend,
 “ Such goodness, such stupendous
 grace,

“ Nor man, nor angels can explore,

“ Then let us, what we cannot trace,
 “ With awful reverence adore.”

And never may we prophane the day, like the giddy multitude, who frequently have ridiculed the veneration with which poor Francis regarded it, and have been heard to say he was a fool.—But if he was a fool, what shall be said of the drunkard and glutton, the deist and infidel, the prodigal and avaricious, all of whom are standing on a dreadful precipice, notwithstanding they, (many of them,) by their possessing abundance of this world's goods may draw the envy of the foolish;—The drunkard and prophane, the irreligious and infidel, the prodigal and avaricious, will fall, all of them fall, into one irremeable misery unless they are favoured with the grace of repentance. And which

misery, they have an awful anticipation of, near the solemn close.

- “ In that dread moment how the
frantic soul
“ Raves round the walls of her clay
tenement,
“ Runs to each avenue, and shrieks
for help,
“ But shrieks in vain ! how wishful-
ly she looks
“ On all she’s leaving, now no long-
er her’s !
“ A little longer, yet a little longer,
“ O ! might she stay to wash away
her crimes,
“ And fit her for her passage ! mourn-
ful sight !
“ Her very eyes weep blood, and
every groan
“ She heaves, is big with horror : but
the foe,

- “ Like a staunch murderer, steady
 to his purpose,
 “ Pursues her close through every
 lane of life
 “ Nor misses once the track, but
 presses on ;
 “ Till, forc’d at last to the tremen-
 dous verge
 “ At once she sinks.”*

O ! that we all may, by timely repentance, and fleeing to him “who is a strong hold in the day of trouble,” experience a different end, and be enabled, through divine grace to combat the ragings of Satan, and despise the misshapen form of Death, and behold

- “ Sweet fields beyond the swelling
 flood
 “ Stand drest in living green ;

* Blair.

“ So to the Jews old Canaan stodd,
 “ While Jordan roll’d between.”†

And preparatory to such a beatic vision, let the drunkard, and glutton, think of the vast difference, between such a course their lives daily exhibit, and that purity we are commanded to attain.—And let the deist stop short in the midst of his career, and remember with all his boasted powers of reason, that as great men as any his whole tribe can produce, were Christians. The late Governor Livingston wrote a little piece, a part of which I will transcribe for your amusement.

“ *Courteous Reader.*

————— “ Did you ever
 “ see a man who had the assurance to

† Watts;

“ tell you, that our belief in the divine
 “ origin of the scriptures is wholly to
 “ be ascribed to the force of educa-
 “ tion, and the early infusions of the
 “ nurse and the priest ; but that all
 “ men of unfettered, uninfluenced
 “ sentiments, all philosophers and rea-
 “ soners, have ever esteemed revela-
 “ tion as imposture ; and this man at
 “ the same time confessing that Sir
 “ Isaac Newton, and Mr. Locke,
 “ and lord Bacon, and Sir, Robert
 “ Boyle, and Grotius, and Boerhave,
 “ and Littleton, and West, and Pas-
 “ cal, and Penn, and Barclay, and
 “ Phipps, were all Christians, after
 “ the most impartial scrutiny and the
 “ most assiduous investigation of the
 “ evidences by which revelation is
 “ supported.”————“ Have you
 “ ever seen such a man sir ? Why,
 “ then you have seen a blockhead.”

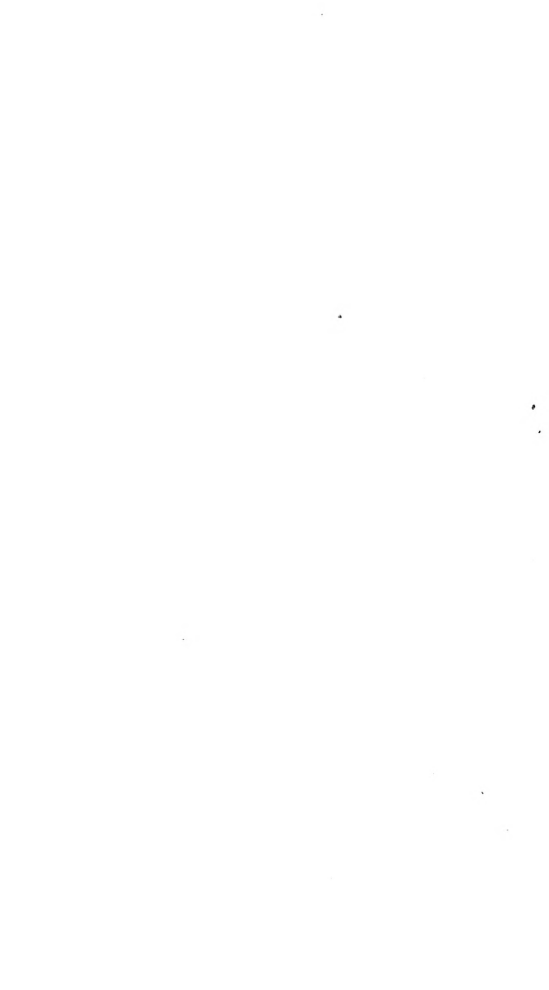
As to the prodigal and avaricious, they as well as the rest, will be involved in ruin, except they repent, but the prodigal has this advantage over the avaricious, for he will soon want the means to pursue his wild schemes of profusion, and there has been many instances of their turning their faces towards their fathers house, after being reduced to their husks, and many, after a grievous repentance have been favoured to reach there. But alas! for the avaricious man, he is so hedged about with error, it will be next to a miracle if he escapes ruin.—For as the prodigal by his waste is reduced to a state whereby he detects the folly of prostituting liberality to subserve his base profusion, is now brought to see that in the out-set he was wrong in separating liberality from economy, from

which he is now sensible his outward ruin is to be traced, but which however, is a mean whereby he escapes everlasting ruin.

While on the other hand, the poor Muck-worm, in his exertions to subsist, as he persuades himself, the bright virtues of prudence and economy, (but which are sadly perverted by him,) finding an increase to his stores, at the same time finds an increase to his desires, and what was intended as a blessing, is rendered a curse to him, and his perverted view of some of the virtues, gives him a total disrelish to the social ones, when at last his heart becomes callous to the common feelings of humanity.

FINIS.

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